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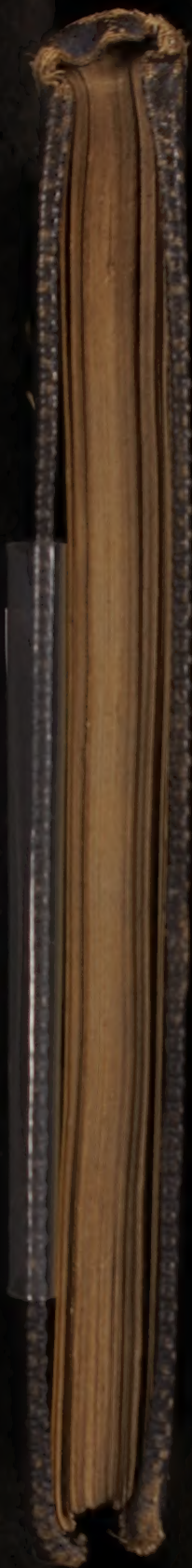
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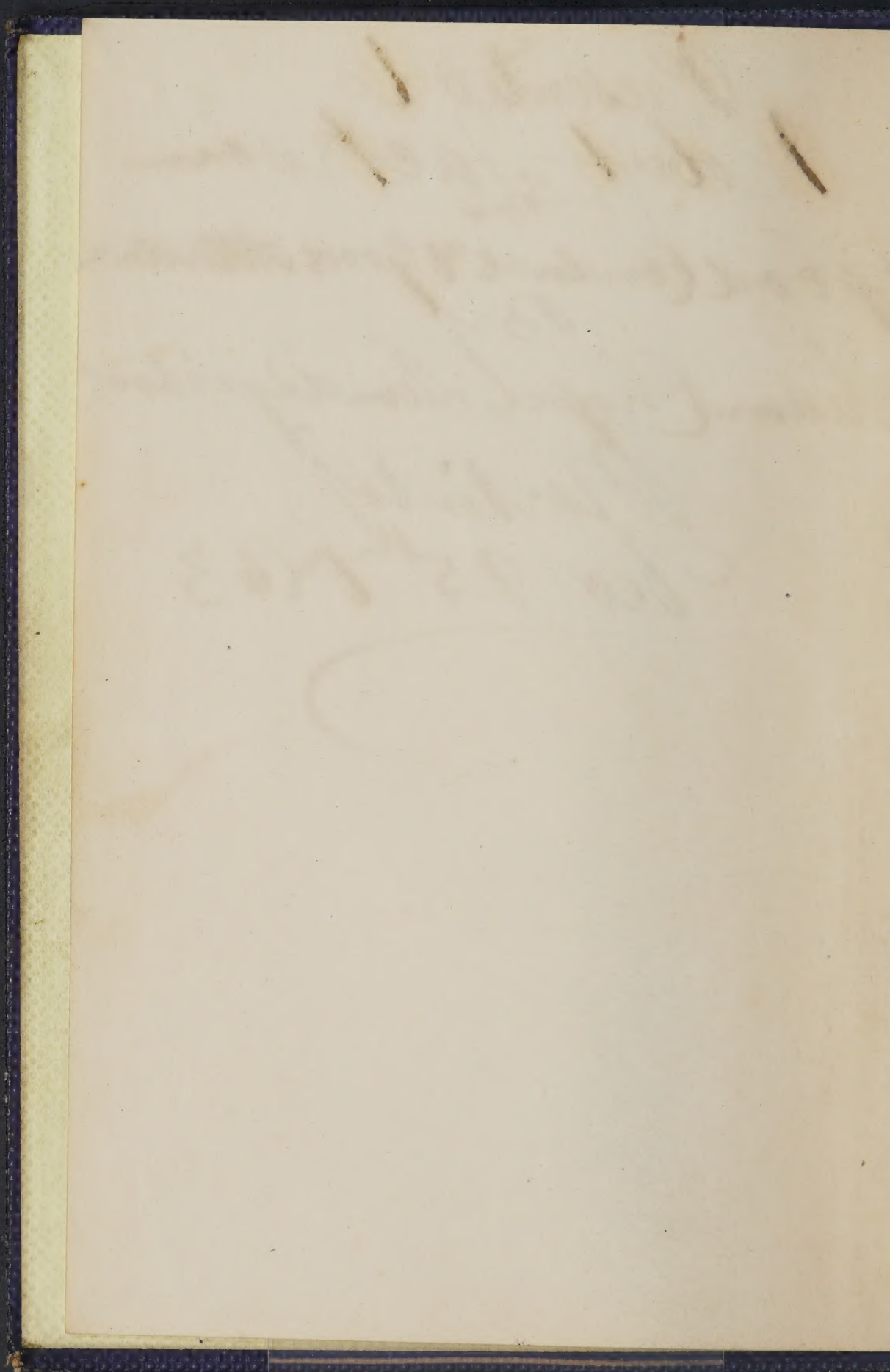


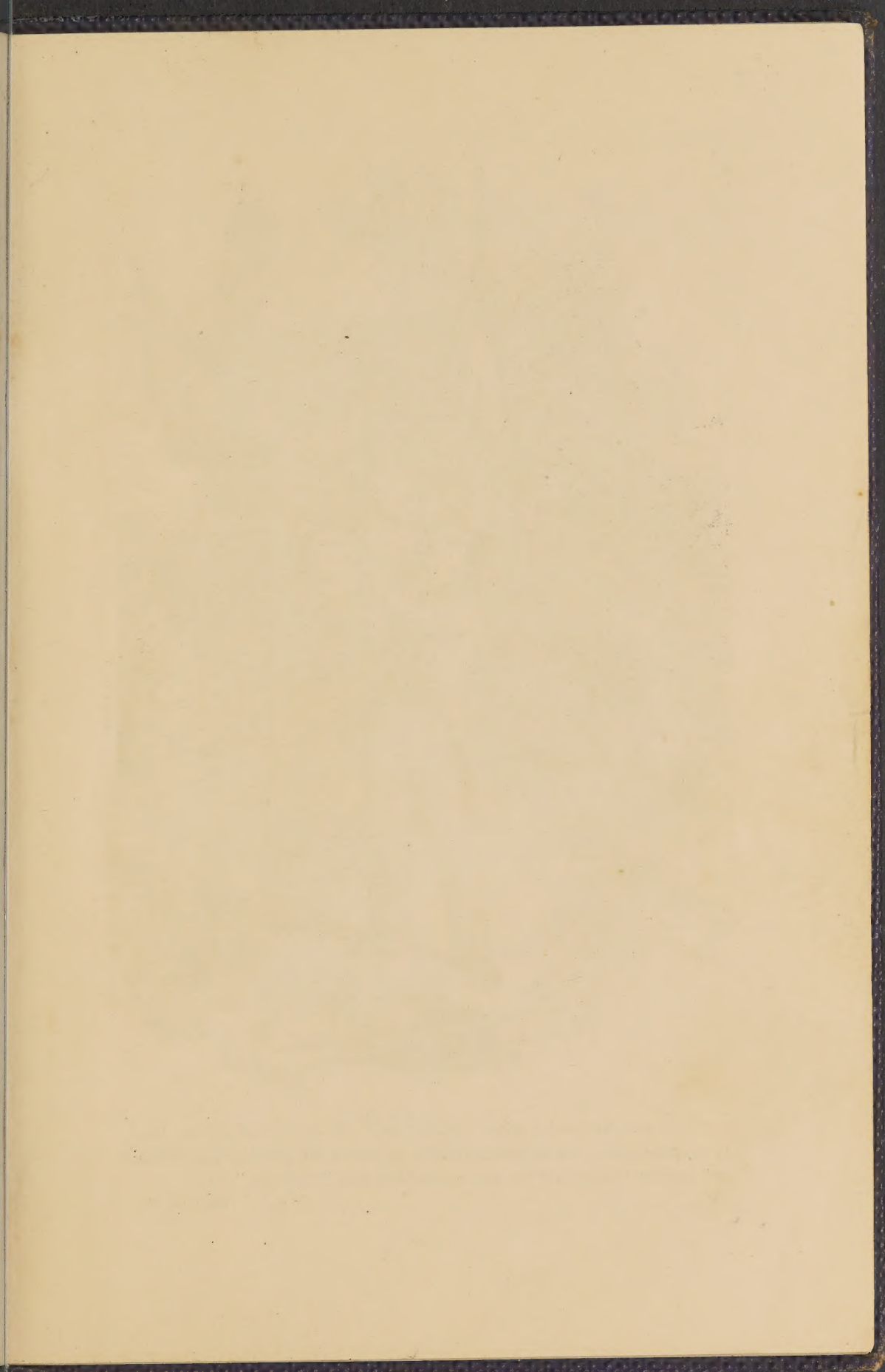
Presented to
Robert Jackson

For
Good Conduct & Good Attendance
Boy

Salem Chapel Sunday School

Martins
Dec 25th 1863







"It is a Saturday evening at the 'Roserie,' one of the happiest of homes. Close to the porch stands TOM BURTON, tossing in his arms a two years' darling, all curls and laughter. Nancy is at the open window with baby in her arms."

See page 76.

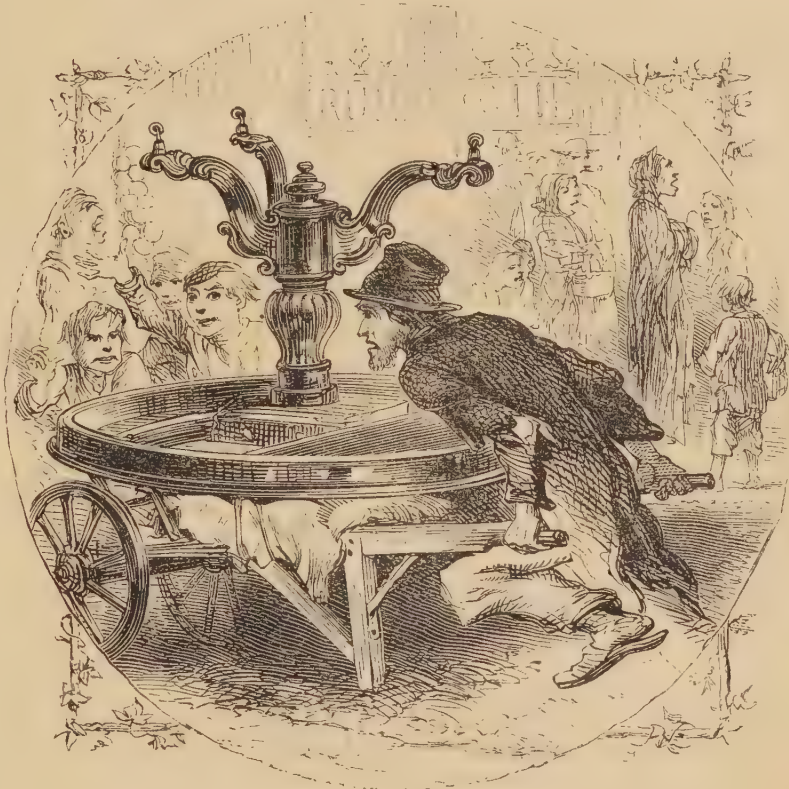
TOM BURTON;

OR,

THE BETTER WAY.

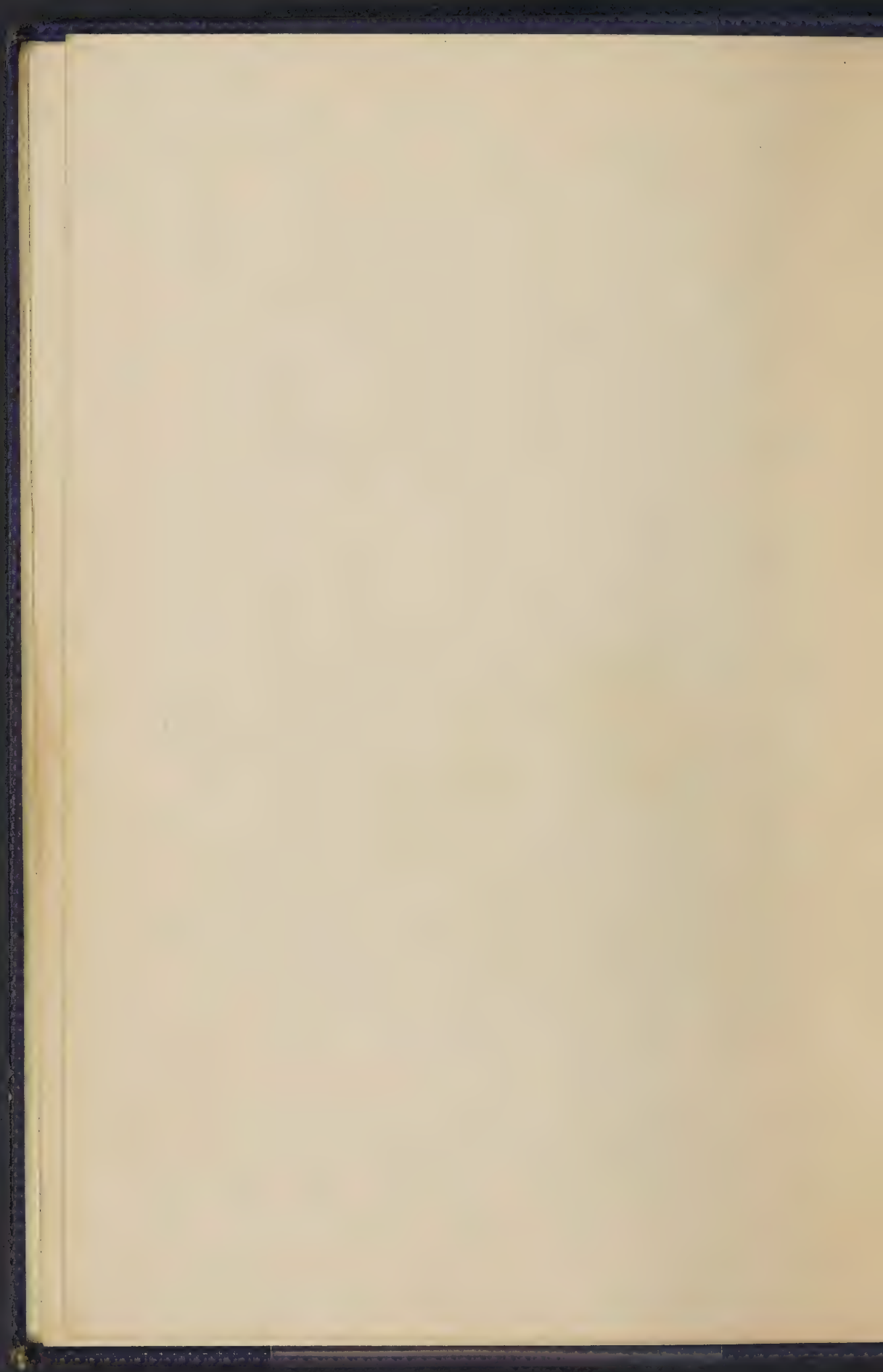
BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE WORKING MAN'S WAY IN THE WORLD."



LONDON :

S. W. PARTRIDGE, 9, PATERNOSTER ROW.



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TOM BURTON;

OR,

THE BETTER WAY.

CHAPTER I.

SATURDAY NIGHT.

THE town clock of —— had just struck six, on a hot August evening, and the chimes were still playing the Easter Hymn, which they always played at that hour twice a day, when a couple of young men in light fustian jackets, and with aprons coiled up round their waists, might have been seen descending the wooden steps which led to the workshops of Mr. Shepherd, carpenter and builder. Ned Miller, the elder by a year or so, was a stalwart fellow, of good muscular proportions, and who, to use his own phrase, “stood six feet in his stockings.” There was a frank, but rather reckless expression in his face, and the glance of his eye betrayed a spirit of independence rather too proud and haughty for one whose lot it was to gain

his bread by the labour of his hands. Tom Burton, the younger man, stood half a head shorter, and the expression of his features was of a totally different character from that of his fellow-workman. There was no want of frankness in his face—far from that—but there was a calm and settled purpose legible to the discriminating observer under the somewhat impassive countenance; and the eye did not flash, but looked steadily at its object with a quiet yet inquisitive gaze.

“Thank goodness!” said Ned, “we are free of the shop for one while; thirty-six hours, my boy, between this and Monday morning. Whew! how hot it has been to be sure; I thought we should all have been melted up there under the tiles. I say, my lad, where are you off to to-night? What do you say to a pot of cool porter, after the steaming, sweltering day we have had?”

“Thank you,” replied Tom, “I can do without it very well till supper time.”

“Pshaw! what a milksop you are. What upon earth are you going to do with yourself between this and bed-time?”

“Oh, there is always plenty to do. In the first place, I am going to buy a book which I saw yesterday on a stall in the market-place,—and, if I get it, that will occupy me, I reckon, till a good many bed-times.”

"Books! why I'll be bound you have forty books already; what's the use of poring over books?"

"Perhaps I shall find that out; at all events I mean to try with this one."

"Well, good luck to you! I shall just go and have one cool pot at the 'Chequers,' and then, mayhap, I shall give you a call at your lodgings."

Ned took the turning which led to the "Chequers," where he called for his cool pot, and soon saw it foaming before him. Tom went on to the market-place, made up to old Price's old book-stall, and commenced a search for a second-hand copy of "Bonycastle's Geometry," which he had seen marked at a price not much exceeding the sum which Ned would disburse for his pot of porter. It was a long time before he found his prize, for the books had been tumbled about by bargain-hunters all day, and he had at last to dig it out from the bottom of the box.

Tom clapped the dogs-eared old copy under his arm as he paid the sixpence.

"There!" said old Price, "you get the sense of that sixpenn'orth into your noddle, and it will be a fortune to you."

"Is it easy?" asked Tom.

"No!" roared the old man with a snort, "that's food for men, not pap for babes and blockheads; go at it *like* a man and you'll master it, not without."

"Thank ye," said Tom, "I'll try;" and he strode on with his bargain.

When he reached his lodging Tom washed his face, threw up the window which looked out upon the meadows, and seating himself in his rush-bottomed chair, commenced his attack upon geometry. He found it difficult at first to fix his attention sufficiently to understand even the simplest definitions. He read the paragraphs again and again without being able to get a clear idea of their signification. "Come," said he to himself, "this is no use; I'll try what writing will do for me." Then he took the slate and pencil, and began copying down, over and over again, the sentences that puzzled him. This plan answered much better, and he began not only to understand but to recollect what he wrote. Time flew rapidly at this work, and before he had mastered a dozen of the definitions the twilight crept over the meadows below, and he could no longer follow the marks of the pencil on the slate.

Meanwhile Ned Miller had not made his appearance as he had promised; and Tom, putting on his hat, sallied forth for his evening walk alone. He rambled along the green lanes, musing on points, lines, and surfaces with a sort of satisfaction at having grasped the fact, which had never struck him before, that these are only imaginary things, and not realities. This dis-

covery set him thinking ; and though it is probable that he did not think much to the purpose, yet as it was new to him to think consecutively at all, the fact of his doing so was an advantage, because it exercised the powers of his mind. After an hour's walk he returned home and partook of the supper his landlord had provided, and then took another pull at the book. This time he did himself harm ; for instead of confining himself to the first principles, he fell to turning over the leaves, and, horrified at the tremendous difficulties which awaited him further on, he despaired of ever surmounting them, and was on the point of abandoning the attempt as useless. Just then, however, the words of old Price came into his mind—"Go at it like a man, and you'll master it." So he thought better of it ; and, resolving not to be beaten, betook himself once more to the definitions until Mrs. Morgan, his landlady, handing him his inch of candle, reminded him that it was "time for Bedfordshire."

The definitions ran in Tom's head after he was in bed, and followed him into the land of dreams ; and the visions of home and his native village were blended with lines, curves, and angles, ere that deep sleep came down which buried all alike in oblivion.

Meanwhile, what had become of Ned Miller ? and why had he not called at Tom's lodgings as he had

intended? Ned had not half finished his cool pot at the "Chequers," before the company in the parlour began to increase. There was a tri-weekly free-and-easy held in the "Chequers" parlour; and soon after dark, while Ned was enjoying his cool beverage, the members began to pour in, to take their seats at the square tables, to call for their beer and grog, to light their pipes, and to settle down for the enjoyment of the harmony which was the ostensible purpose of their meeting. Then, from a dark closet in the rear, an old grand piano was wheeled into the apartment, and an elderly subject, with a pimpled nose and a very ragged edged shirt-collar, but who wore a number of stout gold rings on his fingers, seated himself on the music stool. This was Professor Soke, who led the harmony, and, by presiding at the rickety instrument, was supposed to impart to the proceedings something of an artistic character. His appearance was hailed by a simultaneous kicking of heels, which the old man returned with a nod and by silently pledging the company in a jorum of grog. Then the harmony commenced; songs, duets, and glees were sung, to most of which the whole assembly responded in chorus at the end of each verse, and wound up each performance with a prodigious kicking of heels in applause of their own skill.

Ned Miller, who had a good ear and a tolerable

voice of his own, instinctively joined in the choruses because he couldn't help it. His clear, ringing bass drew the general attention to him, and at the end of one of the songs he was called upon for a solo. Nothing abashed, Ned walked up to the Professor, exchanged a few words in whispers, and then sung out manfully one of the old English ballads about Robin Hood. Long and loud was the applause which followed; and as Ned walked back to his seat he would have been seen to blush, had it been possible to see anything through the dense smoke of fifty pipes which filled the apartment.

What succeeded may be told in a few words. Ned's pot of cool porter was all too soon exhausted in that thirsty atmosphere, and was followed by sundry glasses of hot grog, at the instigation of which he sang again and again, to the enthusiastic cheers of the "sons of harmony." It was twelve o'clock before the party, all roaring in chorus together, burst into the streets, and startled the early sleepers by their wild shouts. How Ned got home to his lodging and to bed he never knew exactly; it must have been more from instinct and habit than from the exercise of his faculties that he found his way to his pillow, where he lay tossing for hours, with dizzy brain and nauseated stomach, ere he fell into a fitful and uneasy slumber.

CHAPTER II.

SUNDAY MORNING.

WHEN Tom Burton woke on Sunday morning, the first thing he saw was the old dog's-eared Bonnycastle lying on the little deal table, and the first thing he thought of was the studies of the night before. Having arisen and dressed himself at his usual hour—for Tom was not one of your Sunday lie-abeds—he felt strongly inclined to take another spell at the geometry, though it *was* Sunday; but there, by the side of the Bonnycastle, lay the pocket-Bible and the Prayer-book which his mother had given him at parting, and recollecting certain promises he had made on receiving them, he laid the Bonnycastle on the book-shelf, and took up the Bible. He sat down and read a chapter, and after that he knelt down and said a short prayer. Then he threw up the window, went down stairs, and started out for a walk by the river side, thinking that there he might chance to meet with Ned. Ned, however, was not at the usual rendezvous, and Tom returned to breakfast without having seen him.

Before the bells rang out for church he had shaved and put on his best coat, in time to accompany his

landlord's family to their pew. On this Sunday morning the new vicar would preach his first sermon; and partly from the novelty, partly from the known character of the preacher, the church was more than usually crowded. Tom, like others, had his curiosity to satisfy with regard to the new minister. When Mr. Carlton made his appearance in the desk, the hundreds present who saw him for the first time, fixed their eyes upon him with an earnestness which, having its source in a profound and personal interest, could not be misunderstood. Could they love and esteem the man whom they were bound to reverence and, in spiritual things, to obey? That was the question each was asking himself, and it was not long ere each had framed a response which set their anxiety at rest. With calm and reverent attention they listened to his earnest voice, and seemed, by the solemnity of their demeanour, at once to acknowledge the importance of his mission and to manifest their respect for his office.

Mr. Carlton took for his text that passage in the Proverbs which says "There is a way which seemeth good unto a man; but the end thereof is death." His language, though forcible and energetic, was the plainest and simplest imaginable. He traced one by one, the various ways which men select for themselves in their pursuit after happiness: the way of ambition, the way of wealth, the way of pride, the way

of sensual indulgence, the way of covetousness and greediness, the way of sloth and idleness—all leading in the end to death, yet all seeming good to those who are content with present good alone. He then drew a different picture, showing that the way of industry, the way of respectability, the way of sobriety, the way of prudence and carefulness, even the quiet way of contented poverty; all these ways, however good they seemed to a man, or however excellent they were pronounced by the moralist, could of themselves lead only to death. He then pointed to Christ, the only way: "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" and demonstrated simply, but powerfully, that whatever the way in which a man may be called by the providence of God to walk, if he have Christ in the heart, he can make that way the way of peace and happiness, and its end everlasting life.

Tom Burton had heard all these truths before, for Tom rarely absented himself a whole Sunday from church; and yet it seemed to him, somehow, that he heard them now for the first time. The fact may have been that Tom had not hitherto made a practice of thinking over what he heard. Now he really did think, and it was fortunate for him that the simple method which the preacher had observed in his discourse had fixed much of it in his memory, so that he could think it over as often as he liked.

In the afternoon Tom wrote down on slips of paper as much as he could remember of the sermon, intending that Ned should have the benefit of it when he came in to tea.

But four o'clock came, and no Ned; when Tom, coupling this non-appearance with his absence from his place in church, set off to his lodgings in search of him.

The Sunday morning had dawned miserably for Ned. Awaking before sunrise, with a burning thirst and a splitting headache, he had lain tossing on the bed till dinner-time. He was unable to partake of the meal, and Tom found him at four o'clock still suffering from nausea, and not dressed.

"Why, how now, Ned?" said Tom, "not dressed! why ar'n't you coming to tea?"

"Pshaw! confound tea and everything else; I've no stomach for anything," drawled Ned.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter; only I got a little fresh last night."

"Fresh! you don't mean tipsy, I hope."

"I reckon I do," said Ned, "I shall tell no lies about it, though it was the smoke that did it."

"I'm sorry to hear it; but rouse up, man, and wash and come into the air; you'll never be well in this close room."

By dint of persuasion and remonstrance, Tom at length got his comrade clean and dressed, and walked him off to his own lodging. There a cup or two of tea recovered him and banished his nausea; but then his drowsiness returned, and throwing himself at full length on a couch he slept out the rest of the evening. Tom took a book and sat by his side; sometimes he read, and sometimes he thought over the discourse of the morning, of one part of which he could not help thinking the present predicament of poor Ned presented a rather striking illustration. "This way, at any rate," said Tom half aloud to himself, "with God's help, I will not tread; from this time forth I will never enter a public-house, save as a traveller for needful refreshment, or on business."

"What is that you are muttering to yourself?" said Ned, half opening his languid eyes.

"I was thinking of the sermon I heard from the new vicar this morning," said Tom; "I have been wishing you had been there."

"O bother sermons; I'm not in a humour for a sermon just now. Don't tell me about it, there's a good fellow. When a chap has made a fool of himself, and knows it, it's too bad to be preaching at him."

Tom was partly of the same opinion, and therefore he held his peace.

CHAPTER III.

UPWARDS AND DOWNWARDS.

WHEN Tom Burton went to work on Monday morning, he put his Bonnycastle into his wallet, along with a hunch of bread and a cut or two from his landlady's Sunday joint—intending that a course of geometry and cold mutton should constitute his dinner for that day. Ned Miller came punctually to work as usual, and declared himself "all right" after his "spree." He was talkative and jocose all day, not at all flinching from the subject of his Saturday night's revel, but allowing that he had been for once "overtaken," as he termed it, and was undeniably the worse for liquor, "all owing to the smoke of so many pipes, to which he was not accustomed." The old foreman warned him in a friendly way against acquiring a habit of drinking, reminding him at the same time of the well-known regulation of their employer with regard to his workmen, Mr. Shepherd invariably discharging any man in whom the habit was confirmed. Ned was somewhat staggered at this rebuke, and assumed the air of an injured person; but the next moment he

laughed it off, and went on with his work as though nothing had been said.

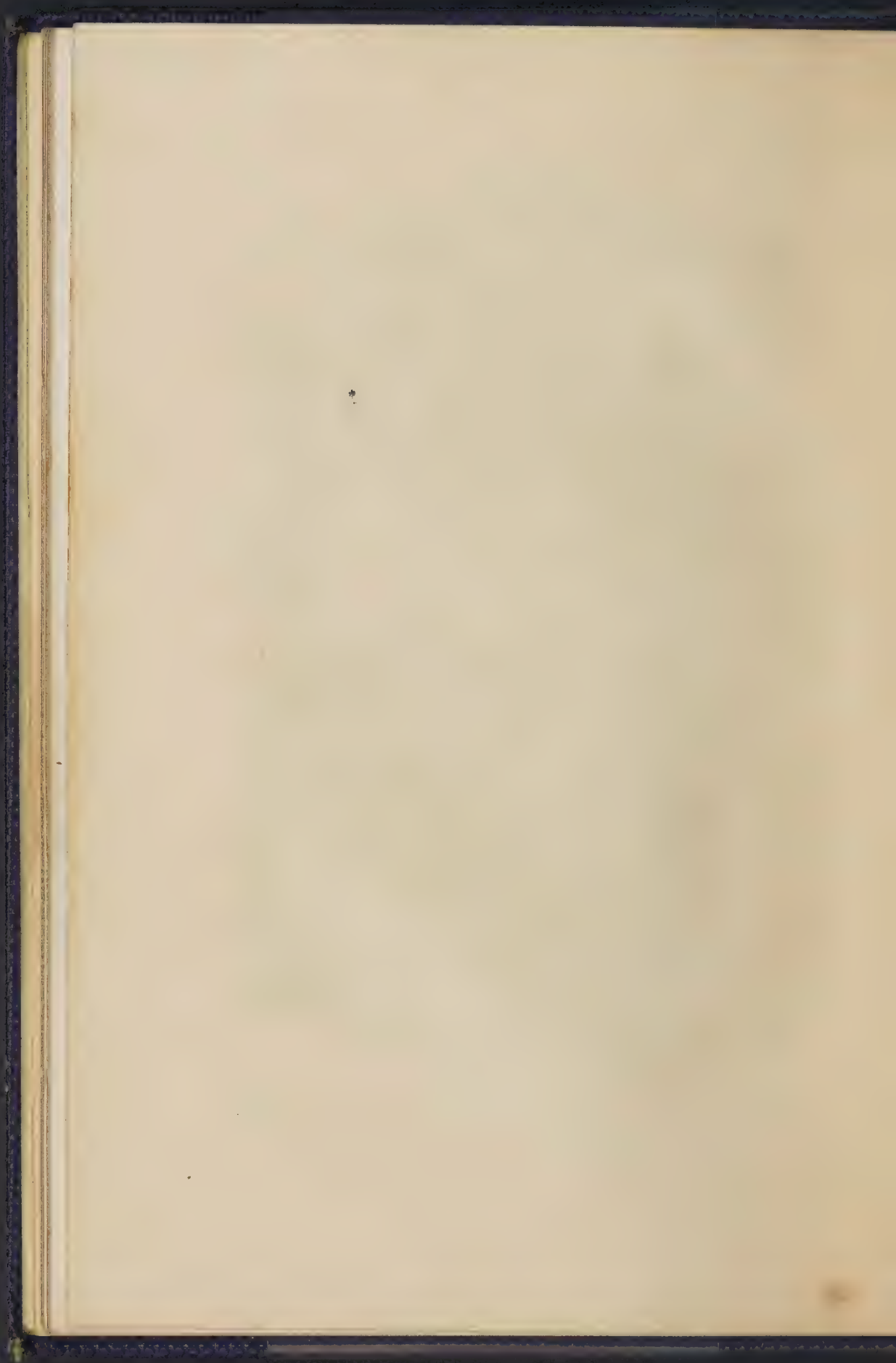
At twelve o'clock, when the men left for dinner, Tom took his cold provisions, and sat down again to his definitions. Having now revolved them in his mind, he found them much more clear and intelligible, and began to see that though his unassisted progress must necessarily be slow, it would, with perseverance, be real and substantial. Day after day he pursued this course—having his dinner sent into the workshop from a neighbouring eating-house, and thus saving time which would be otherwise lost. The men joked him on his perseverance and some of them denounced the attempt as hopeless, they having tried it themselves, as they said, and failed. Tom, recollecting old Price's advice, went on with his study, merely saying that no harm would come of it, even if he got no good.

"Aye, aye," said the old foreman, "there is nothing like sticking to a thing if you once go in for it. Let the lad alone. I've heard say that what's impossible to one man sometimes proves easy enough to another. If Tom Burton likes to work them problems, mayhap it's because he's got the brains for it—leastways, we shall see."

Tom had some doubts of his having the "brains for it;" but he was determined to have the perseverance, and never dreamed of giving up the attempt. The men got used to his singularity in time, and



"How long have you been at this, my lad?" said a voice behind him. Tom looked up, and immediately leaped to his feet, with a bow to his employer; for it was Mr. Shepherd who had spoken. (p. 17.)



ceased to remark upon it. Tom tried to inoculate Ned, of whose talents he had a high opinion, with the love of the same pursuit; but Ned was now far gone in another direction—all day long he was either humming or whistling new tunes, or exercising his voice in fanciful runs and cadenzas, to the no small amazement and admiration of the apprentice boys.

There had been no repetition of that Saturday night's disgraceful excess; but, on the other hand, Tom had ceased to see him on the Sundays at his lodgings, and had missed him altogether from his seat in church. It was evident to Tom that Ned had found some other friend whose society was more attractive than his own; and he himself, in the enthusiasm of his new pursuit, which daily presented more fascinations to his mind, and absorbed all the leisure of his evenings, had not found time for inquiry as to his old comrade's proceedings.

It was some months after the opening of our tale. Tom was alone in the workshop, and crouching over the stove, for the weather was bitterly cold, with his dog's-eared volume in his hand. He had drawn a problem with chalk upon a plank, and was in a brown study, thinking out the demonstration.

"How long have you been at that, my lad?" said a voice behind him.

Tom looked up, and immediately leaped to his

feet, with a bow to his employer; for it was Mr. Shepherd himself who had spoken.

"I bought the book," he said modestly, "last August, and have been trying to see my way in it ever since."

"And you can see your way thus far?" said Mr. Shepherd, pointing to the diagram on the plank.

"I think I can, sir."

"Have you had any instruction?"

"None, sir."

"You are aware, I suppose, that nearly all the scientific knowledge required by builders and engineers is derived from the science of geometry?"

"I had imagined as much," said Tom.

"And you study with a view to an improved knowledge of your business?"

"I cannot say so; I don't think I have had that much in my mind."

"Well, my lad, it is very creditable to you. Take my advice—get as much practical geometry into your head as you can. I will talk to you again before long. By the bye, I want a model made from a drawing; it is rather complex, and must be done to a nicety; do you think you can manage it?"

"I should like to try," said Tom, with diffidence.

"Then, come down to the counting-house at two o'clock, and I will show you what is wanted."

As Mr. Shepherd left the shop, Ned, who had

just returned from his dinner, came up the steps. "Halloo," said he; "wasn't that the Governor, Tom? What's up now?"

"Yes," said Tom, "it was; he wants a job done; I am to go down for orders at two o'clock."

"And how goes the geometry? are you going to get any good out of it?"

"I hope so; I wish you'd take a turn at it too; I'll show you over the ground I've gone if you like."

"Thank you; I've other fish to fry. Look here," and he unrolled a sheet of paper, "here's my lesson; I'm walking into music scientifically, and learning to sing by note."

"Not for the sake of singing at the 'Chequers' I hope," said Tom.

"What does it signify to you where I sing?" said Ned, angrily, as he thrust the paper again into his pocket.

"I beg your pardon," said Tom, "I spoke hastily, but as a friend, believe me."

"When I want your advice," said the other, "I'll ask for it."

At that moment the clock struck one—the bell rattled a lively peal, and the men and boys crowded into the shop to resume their labours.

At two o'clock Tom went down to the counting-house, and received instructions concerning the model.

It was, as Mr. Shepherd had said, rather a complex affair, and the making of it in mahogany occupied two entire days. But Tom took care that it should be well made, and with the exactest precision in all the parts. Mr. Shepherd was evidently pleased; but he did not say much at the time. He locked the model in his desk; but as Tom was leaving the room he looked up and said, "If you are disengaged this evening between eight and nine, I shall be glad to see you."

You may be sure that Tom had no engagement to keep him away. He made himself as neat as he could, and at the time appointed knocked at the private door of his employer's residence. He was shown by a servant into a library, the walls of which were lined with books; while the large table in the centre was covered with papers, plans, and drawings, and the implements used in executing them. Tom had barely time to glance round at these things when Mr. Shepherd came in.

"Be seated, my lad," he said, pointing to a chair; "I have been examining your model, it is all that could be desired, and I am obliged to you for the pains you have taken; but of that another time. I wish to talk to you a little on the subject of your studies. You said that the other day you began working at Bonnycastle without any view of improving yourself in your profession. I can easily understand that

in one who has evidently a mathematical bias ; but it will not do for a young man like you, who has his bread to win, to be following an abstract study for the mere love of the thing. You must be a practical mechanic, and not a book-worm. Learn all you can, of course ; but learn the practical application of all the knowledge you acquire, as fast as you get it. What do you think of that advice ?”

“I think,” said Tom, “it is the best I can follow, though it will be difficult for me without a guide.”

“But you shall have guides : you see I have been thinking of you. I like to encourage a spirit of self-improvement and self-reliance. Here, in this parcel, are three books by Nicholson—on Carpentering, on Building, and on General Mechanics. Read these carefully in connection with your Geometry ; they will show you the right use of the science so far as it is likely to concern yourself and your business. If you are wise, you will not wish to follow it further at present. The books are expensive, and of course you will take all care of them ; but I may trust them in your hands, I know.”

“You shall have no cause to repent your kindness,” said Tom ; “I will take all possible care of them.”

“But do not be afraid to use them, mind that. Well, now there is another business I want to speak about. All you men and lads in my employ, and

there are hundreds of others in the town, have a great deal of disengaged time on your hands, and some of you, I am afraid, make but an indifferent use of it. Mr. Carlton has proposed that we should establish a working-man's institution, on some basis or other, for the intellectual and moral advantage of the working classes. You, as a working man here, should be able to say something on that subject. What is your opinion? How would it be received, think you?"

"Most eagerly, I should imagine," said Tom; "for my own part, I should be delighted to join."

"Very well; then I shall put your name down. This day week we shall have a meeting here on the subject, when I will trouble you to attend. In the mean time, you must beat up recruits about the town, and bring us as good a list of members as you can. There, that is all; I have an appointment at nine, and have only five minutes to spare. Good evening to you." And Mr. Shepherd was off without waiting for Tom's expressions of gratitude.

This was the first information that Tom had had concerning the proposed institution, which Mr. Carlton was labouring to establish. He had secluded himself latterly so much with his studies, that most of the current gossip of the town had escaped him. Now, however, that he began to beat up his acquaintances, he found that the subject had been consider-

ably canvassed in all quarters, and had excited in some a lively interest. He had no difficulty in enrolling a round number of names, and before the week was out had registered more than fifty as desirous of benefiting themselves by the measures in prospect. Others, on whom he had relied, hung back for some unaccountable reason, and amongst them, to his astonishment, Ned Miller declined to give in his adhesion, on no other grounds than that he didn't see the use of it.

Tom would have been less astonished had he known the particulars of Ned's history during the last few months. The truth was, that the applause showered upon him by the "Sons of Harmony" at the Chequers, at which he was now almost a nightly frequenter, had well-nigh turned his head. Confining himself to what he conceived a moderate allowance of drink, and never exceeding it, he had not again been "overtaken," as he termed it, and imagined himself now superior to all temptations that way. He was constantly building castles in the air, and framing myths, in which he figured as a basso of astonishing renown and prodigious fortune. The idea of joining a working-man's association was all too low for his swelling ambition. Pooh! he would electrify the fashionable audiences of London some day, and have the world under his foot! And yet, oddly enough,

he felt secretly angry with the fuss made about the new institute, while he affected to despise it. Was it that he feared some of the Sons of Harmony would be seduced by the charms of knowledge and join it, in which case the number of his admirers would be diminished? It may have been so.

Tom was present at the meeting at his employer's house on the appointed evening, and had the pleasure of being introduced to Mr. Carlton, who shook him warmly by the hand, and hailed him as a coadjutor. The list which he delivered in was received as a good omen, and measures were immediately set on foot for inaugurating the society, and getting it into working order.

"We must do everything," said Mr. Carlton, "as cheaply as possible, that there may be no excuse among those we seek to benefit for holding back; the cost of membership must be nearly nominal, and at the same time the advantages to be derived must be real and substantial. I shall take anything that any of you will give; and I don't mean to be satisfied with that. We must have books, and you must rob your libraries; we want teachers, and I shall press as many of you for that office as I can. Remember, there is good to be done and evil to be combated, and no man who can forward the work has a right to be idle."

Talking in this way Mr. Carlton acted in the same energetic spirit. He formed the nucleus of a library

from his own book-shelves; he delivered a spirited address at the Town Hall, and collected a good sum towards expenses; he transformed the school-room into a temporary institute until more roomy premises could be found; he pledged himself to a course of lectures, and took the lead in teaching a grammar class. Some of his fellow-workers felt rather alarmed at the extraordinary vigour of his proceedings; but he worked himself so heartily and cheerily, and tempered his enthusiasm with such genial kindness, that they were ashamed to demur, and catching the contagion of his example, set their shoulders to the wheel in right earnest. Amongst others, Tom Burton was not a little dismayed at finding himself booked as a teacher of two elementary classes—one of arithmetic, and one of mathematics. It was in vain, however, that he remonstrated with Mr. Carlton, and declared his want of qualification.

“I will hear nothing of the sort,” said that gentleman. “Not qualified! you know the rule of three, don’t you? and you have got over the asses’ bridge? Help a score of these young fellows to as much as that, and by that time you will be able to do more. Now, not a word! I am doing you a real service, though you don’t think so: *we never learn so thoroughly as when we are teaching others.*”

And so Tom found it. The recurrence to first

principles, to which he was compelled one night in every week by his occupation as a teacher, fixed them indelibly in his own memory, and helped him materially in the prosecution of more advanced studies.

The Working-man's Institute was fairly afloat and in good working trim soon after Christmas. Tom Burton had never been so happy in his life: he was gaining knowledge daily and imparting it to others; and his heart overflowed with gratitude to God and man for the blessings he enjoyed.

Ned Miller had kept aloof from the Institute all along—on principle, as he was pleased to say. He talked rather windily in the workshop about the independence of the workmen, and characterised Tom's conduct as rather *infra dig.*, in placing himself in leading strings, and "acting as flunky to the parson." By one of those coincidences which sometimes come to pass, it happened that the very night Tom tremblingly took charge of his elementary class, Ned was uproariously installed as "Vice-Grand," at a special free-and-easy convened by the Sons of Harmony for the purpose, where, amidst a thunderous kicking of heels from the assembly, and an extra double handful of notes from the red-nosed Professor, he took his seat at the centre of the cross table, with an ivory hammer in his hand, and a german-silver medal on his breast.

CHAPTER IV.

COMING EVENTS.

PROFESSOR SOKE was a man who had seen better days. There was a good deal in his exterior which gave the spectator to understand as much as that. Independent of the rings on his fingers, of the rich hue of that somewhat unctuous spriggy waistcoat, of the genteel cut of the snuff-coloured coat long since run to seed, and of the yellow wristbands which peeped out under the cuffs—there was an air and manner about him which testified to the fact of his having formerly moved in polite society. What were the precise circumstances which had shifted him out of the genteel circles, where his fine musical talents had once won him golden opinions from his aristocratic pupils, and had landed him in the smoky limbo of the Chequers parlour, we are not in a condition exactly to record. The rumour ran that exception had been taken by his patrons to a very marked incoherency in his prelections, which they were uncivil enough to attribute to the effect of spirituous potations; but the Professor himself, who

seemed utterly unconscious of the existence of such a rumour, referred his misfortunes to the calumny and malice of mankind in general, and the ill-offices of certain false friends in particular.

Certain it is, that at the time of which we are writing the Professor was undeniably at odds with fortune. His wife had long since been dead—his grown-up sons had all left him to fiddle their way to competence on their own account—and, deserted by all but one only daughter, he now lived in cheap lodgings over a coal and potato shed in a street running out of the market-place; rarely moving out of his easy chair, save to earn a few stray shillings by attending a casual pupil, or to keep his weekly appointment with the Sons of Harmony. On these latter occasions he was always late, for the members of the free-and-easy never broke up till midnight, and even after their departure their leader was accustomed to solace himself with a parting glass partaken with the landlord in the privacy of the curtained bar. Here his daughter was generally in waiting to assist him home, for podagra had already laid an embargo on his great toe, and without her assistance he would have found the walk to his lodgings, short as it was, but a painful pilgrimage.

Cecilia Soke was a tall and somewhat dashing lass of seven and twenty. Like her father, she cherished

the remembrance and loved to display the insignia of better and more prosperous times. Out of doors she sparkled in obsolete old-fashioned trinkets, and fluttered in faded silks and flowers and ribbons of the gayest, and bore herself loftily on all occasions. She had been thoroughly drilled in the theory of music, and had a voice of astonishing power and flexibility, which wanted but the one quality of melodiousness to render it perfect—but, wanting that, proved, for all practical purposes, good for very little. Time was when Cecilia had dreamed of fame and fortune to be achieved by her own talents, but that dream had long been past. The public had set its face against her “astonishing execution,” and would not accept as charming and delightful what they felt to be perplexing and wearisome; and after a few trials, each less satisfactory than the preceding one, her musical career had been put to a sudden death by a slashing criticism in one of the provincial papers. Her vanity had saved her from acute suffering on this account; she attributed to malice and favouritism the verdict which condemned her to private life, and she retained her own good opinion of her voice, and kept it in exercise by occasional home practice.

When Ned Miller made up his mind to “go in for music scientifically,” he applied, as a matter of

course, to old Soke for instruction. That worthy, who had all along been flattering him up to that point, was but too ready to come to terms. Ned had no time to take lessons in the day, and he was too much in vogue at the Chequers, where politics and discussion alternated with the free-and-easies, to be able to spare his evenings. No other time remained, therefore, save the Sundays, and as Ned had long given up attending church, he made no objection when Soke proposed that the weekly lessons should come off on the Sunday afternoons. A twelvemonth before, Ned would have started at such a proposition, and have shrunk from it with instinctive reluctance; but his religious feelings had long succumbed under the influence of the society he had lately frequented, and having long absented himself from the service of God in His temple, we need not marvel that he made no scruple of thus employing the hours of the Sabbath.

So now every Sunday afternoon was spent by Ned in sol-fa-ing it in the Professor's tawdry drawing-room over the potato-shop, to the Professor's wiry piano. To encourage his stalwart pupil, Mr. Soke summoned his daughter to assist in the lessons. Cecilia had not the slightest objection, and she generally managed to cut a rather imposing figure by appearing in full dress and glistening in hardware

at the arrival of the visitor. Ned was at first astonished at the young lady's amazing proficiency in the art in which he was such a tyro; and then he felt as much fascinated by her condescension in smoothing the difficulties of his path, and making the mysteries of the science plain to his comprehension. By the time the lesson was over, Cecilia would have the tea-things on the table, and it was but common courtesy to ask Mr. Miller to take a cup of tea. At first Ned declined these invitations, and went his way, Cecilia seeing him to the door and dismissing him with a bland smile. But after a few Sundays he was prevailed upon to stay and pass the evening in conversation with his hosts, sometimes enlivened by the extemporaneous modulations of the old gentleman on his instrument, when a fit of inspiration came over him, or by a sentimental air from the daughter to the father's accompaniment.

When Ned had mastered the scale and began to read off his music with tolerable fluency, he felt more at ease and less abashed in Cecilia's company. He would now venture upon a duet with the maiden, who only expressed what she really felt when she praised the quality of his fine voice and prophesied great things from its cultivation. Her commendations had a powerful effect upon Ned, and he did his best to deserve them still more. She played in-

differently well upon the piano herself; and often, when the old man would sink off to slumber in his easy chair by the fire, she would seat herself at the instrument, and rehearse once more the lessons which Ned had received, assisting him with her voice in committing them to memory. The familiarity thus engendered between the two gradually became more intimate; and ultimately, as the Professor had probably foreseen, ripened into a more tender relation. Fascinated by her manners, which were superior to those of the class among whom he had been bred, and perhaps touched by the evident partiality with which she regarded him, Ned soon showed that he was not indifferent to her good opinion, and, more than that, he gave her from time to time occasion to see that he was striving earnestly to obtain it. The result of all this was, that before many months had elapsed, Cecilia Soke and Ned Miller became engaged to each other, without anything like either encouragement or opposition on the part of the old gentleman, who, perhaps, for some reason which he did not care to manifest, chose to ignore the existing state of affairs, though it was impossible that he could fail to be aware of it.

There is no doubt but that Cecilia's regard for Ned was sincere, more so, perhaps, than his for her; and had she been well trained and religiously taught,

and accustomed herself to tread the better way, she might have used the influence which she rapidly acquired over her lover to lead him also into the right path, and wean him from the follies and temptations of the world. But, alas! there was no hope of this; accustomed herself from childhood to the neglect, almost total, of the worship of God—inured to the irregular and intemperate habits of her parent, and to the poverty and embarrassment which are their natural consequences—and an utter stranger to those tranquil domestic enjoyments which make the fireside a home, she was the last person in the world whom a working man should have chosen for the partner and companion of his lot. Though she had been sole manager of the household affairs for almost half of her lifetime, her long experience, instead of teaching her economy and thrift, had, from the want of early training, only confirmed her in habits of shiftless imprudence when money was plentiful, and equally shiftless parsimony when neither money nor credit was to be had. She had been so long familiarized to domestic vicissitudes, had alternated for so many years between temporary prosperity and profusion, and seasons of privation and hardship, that she had become inured to such changes, and regarding them as matters of course, was at no care to ward off the evil day by measures of prudence and fore-

thought. When receipts were low, she submitted to privations without a murmur; but when fortune smiled again, and money came in, she rewarded her self-denial with indulgences which she would have been better without. What was still worse, Cecilia, who knew nothing of the obligations of religion, was, on the other hand, habituated to the spectacle of her father's demoralizing habits. If the Professor rarely got decidedly intoxicated—and perhaps that much might be said of him—it is equally true that he rarely went to bed sober; it is certain that nearly one half of his income melted into grog, either at home or at the Chequers; the spirit-bottle and tumbler were always within reach of his hand as he sat in his easy chair of an evening, and he was invariably in a condition of dreamy mystification ere he retired to rest. This state of matters, which would have shocked a stranger and would have driven a pious daughter to her knees in agonizing prayer on behalf of a perishing parent, was to poor Cecilia only the normal condition of things. She had been naturalized to it from her childhood, and saw nothing extraordinary or reprehensible in it—so completely do habit and intimacy with what is evil pervert our perceptions of its nature. It was one great thing in the poor girl's favour that she never touched the intoxicating cup herself; she had never acquired the habit, for the

old man had had the sense from the beginning to place the severest interdict upon that ; and, therefore, while she believed that such indulgences were quite allowable on the part of her sire, she would have despised herself had she participated in them. If Ned Miller sometimes joined the old gentleman in his evening libations, Cecilia, it may be readily conceived, harboured no apprehensions on that score ; on the contrary, she learned to mix and sweeten the compound to his liking, and at his request would even touch it with her lips ere he sipped it himself.

Alas, for Ned ! he is evidently not in the better way, and his matrimonial prospects do not strike us as very promising.



CHAPTER V.

MORE COMING EVENTS.

THE Working-man's Institute made satisfactory progress, and promised to be of signal use to the young men of the town. The lectures were well attended, not only by the members and their families, but also by classes above them in social position, who were but too glad to avail themselves of the means of improvement. The students increased their numbers almost weekly, and Tom Burton found that he was not likely to get clear away from the first principles either of arithmetic or mathematics for a long while to come. He stuck to his classes manfully, and being naturally apt in communicating what knowledge he possessed, soon proved himself of real value to the rising institution. Mr. Carlton sometimes dropped in upon him as he was engaged in his task, and had always a word of encouragement both for teacher and learners. In private he thanked Tom warmly for the zeal he manifested in the prosecution of his labours—labours which Tom was quite aware, by the time he had been engaged in them a month, were at least as

advantageous to himself as they were to the beginners under his care.

But there was another person who felt himself under obligations to Tom, and was ever ready to acknowledge them. This was Mr. Mallet, the school-master, who was engaged for the higher mathematical classes in the institute, and whose pupil Tom was in his turn. Mallet was a white-haired little man, past his grand climacteric, but gay as a bird and active as a squirrel; his whole life flowed on in one everlasting current of good humour, which it seemed that nothing could check or turn aside; and this admirable quality was only rivalled by his patience, which was equally inexhaustible. These two capital endowments, united with a very fair amount of scholastic learning, made him an incomparable teacher; and under his auspices Tom Burton soon found out what a grand difference there is between burrowing blindly for knowledge by one's own instincts, and being helped to its attainment by a skilful hand. Mallet was as enthusiastic a teacher as Tom was a student; the more eagerly Tom questioned, the more readily the old man responded; and the more greedy the appetite of the one, the better pleased the other to satisfy it. What might have been foreseen very soon ensued—a warm friendship sprung up between the old man and the young one. The school-

master invited the journeyman carpenter to his home; and as Tom bashfully hung back, and would not promise to come lest he might intrude, Mallet invaded his lodgings one night, and hauling him off in spite of his bashfulness, installed him in a chair at his fireside.

That was an eventful hour for Tom Burton, for by the schoolmaster's fireside he fell in with a fair face which he had met in his walks from time to time, and whose lineaments had left their impress on his imagination, stamped so deeply that they would often present themselves to his mind's eye when he either was or supposed himself to be pondering some abstract subject. Tom did not know that Mallet had a daughter; and had he known that much he would have been far from suspecting her to be the owner of the face which had haunted him at intervals these two years past. His first feeling, on being introduced to her by her father, was the fear lest he had at any moment inadvertently annoyed her by the glances which he could not help in their casual meetings; but he might have been easy on that subject, for Nancy Mallet was not in the habit of observing whether others observed her. She received him with quiet courtesy and without a blush, and withdrew silently, while he was in conversation with her father, to prepare the evening meal.

The ice once broken, Tom soon felt himself at home

in the house of his kind friend. Mallet was rich in books, the hoardings of a lifetime; and his first act was to make Tom free of them all, advising him at the same time to be select in his reading, and to prefer what would be of practical advantage in after-life. "It is of no use," he said, "for a young man in your position to attempt everything. I have lived long enough in the world to see the folly of that, and much noble endeavour and fine talent have I seen thrown away by men in humble life attempting things too great for them. In all ranks of society the most successful man is the man of one pursuit; and this rule is of tenfold force when applied to men who have their living to get. I hope, my dear boy, that you will bear it in mind."

"I trust I shall," said Tom; "it is much the same advice that Mr. Shepherd gave me when he lent me those books. By the way, ought I not to return them by this time?"

"You need not be in a hurry, if he has not asked for them. Suppose you bring them here, and we go through them together."

"I should like that much, but it would give you such trouble."

"It would give me a pleasure, you mean. See to it that you bring them on Thursday night; to-morrow we shall be at the Institute."

The books were brought on the Thursday, and the spare evenings of a month were spent in reading and discussing the practical wisdom they contained. At the end of that time, thanks to the illustrative comments of Mallet and the copious extracts the old man had compelled him to make, Tom felt that he had fairly done with them—and that he need not longer retain them.

It is not to be inferred that all the time which Tom passed in the schoolmaster's house was passed in the society of the schoolmaster's daughter. The fact was very different. Nancy Mallet, who was her widowed father's sole companion, had more business on her hands than generally falls to the share even of only daughters. She not only managed the whole of the household economy by the aid of a little girl learning to be a servant; but while her father taught in his schoolroom, she had duties of her own as daily governess to a family of young children residing in the suburbs, which drew her abroad after an early breakfast, and occupied her morning hours up to dinner-time. After that there were domestic concerns to be looked to—there was needlework to be done—there were some poor, sick pensioners to visit, and there was the quiet hour or two of reading and study for the improvement of her own mind and talents. Thus Tom saw her but seldom, save when

he stayed to supper, which, to say the truth, he sometimes did for the sole sake of seeing her; and the more frequently he stayed, the more he felt inclined to stay and enjoy the pleasure of her society.

Though the winter this year was long and severe, and the snow lay on the ground till the middle of March, it seemed to Tom that the cold season had never passed away so quickly, certainly it had never passed so pleasantly and profitably for him before. When the south winds blew, and the snow vanished, and the meadows put on their green dress, the charms of nature out of doors drew many of the members from the Institute, and the course of lectures being now finished, the attendance at the rooms began to slacken. This was no more, however, than was to be expected, and Mr. Carlton was neither surprised nor sorry to see that many of the lads and young men preferred boating on the river, angling on its banks, or cricketing on the common, when the weather was favourable for such sports. In fact, he made no scruple of handling oar or cricket-ball himself, and astonished some of them not a little with the style in which he feathered his oars, and the ease and certainty with which he sent their wickets flying in the air. He knew by this time that the institution he had set on foot had taken deep root in the town, and that the advantages it afforded to a numerous class were

prized too highly to be willingly surrendered by them; and he knew also, by his own experience, that they would return from their healthful recreations with fresh vigour and energy to more important pursuits.

In his secret heart Tom Burton half regretted the advent of the fine spring weather, because it brought an end to those fireside meetings at which, perhaps not quite consciously to himself, he had been nourishing into a passion his admiration of Nancy Mallet. Ere long he fell into some rather unsatisfactory communings with himself. The sudden apparition, one day, of Nancy in the neatest of white dresses had set his heart a-thumping in a way that, while it made him ashamed of his nervousness, revealed to him a fact which up to this hour, had any one charged him with it, he would have denied. "What a vain blockhead I am!" he said to himself; "here have I, silly moth, been fluttering round the flame until I've got my wings singed. I ought to have known that such a girl would look higher than a journeyman carpenter, and if I had not been a fool I should have avoided instead of seeking her presence."

The consequence of the discovery was that Tom, resolving to punish his own vanity and presumption, absented himself from Mallet's house, never going near it for more than a fortnight, a measure which

did not in the slightest degree modify his feelings towards the young maiden, though it certainly was not without its effect in punishing himself. He now, during the temporary suspension of his classes, found himself almost alone. Ned he never saw, save in the workshop, where his old comrade affected to look down upon him, and met his advances either with scornful silence or a direct rebuff. He had no intimate associate with whom to share his leisure; and as for working problems just now, he found that to be out of the question. So he took to walking moodily on the river's brink, with his hands in his pockets, and his eyes following the flecks of foam as they floated past, while he listened to the talk of the sedge and reeds as the onward current gurgled among them.

One evening, while he was thus musing, just as the stars were beginning to twinkle out of the blue, a smart slap on the shoulder roused the dreamer out of his reverie. He turned, and there stood Mallet, the everlasting smile on his fresh, rosy face, looking all the rosier from the contrast with the white whiskers and the flush of recent exercise.

"Why, where have you been this age?" said the old man. "We have been looking for you night after night, and I have a job of work I want you to do for me, which has been waiting this week past. Not ill, I hope."

"Not at all," said Tom, "thank you."

"Eh! quite sure?"

"Quite."

"Then come along; I'll show you what I want done in the summer-house before it gets dark."

"Not to-night," said Tom; "I'll call to-morrow, between twelve and one." Tom said this because he knew that at that hour Nancy would not be returned from the morning's work.

"Well, that will do," said Mallet; "but what ails you, my boy? You are out of sorts, I am sure. I don't want to pry into your secrets; but if there is any trouble, you know, I hope, that I would help you if I could."

Tom was silent for some moments, while the old man eyed him with a puzzled air. Tom was thinking and fighting with his thoughts. By nature frank, open, and sincere, it irked him to act deceptively towards one who had proved so much his friend; at the same time he shrank instinctively from betraying his own weakness, and he feared, moreover, lest the revelation he had to make should be unwelcome to the feelings of the father. He came to the conclusion, however, that it was his duty to act in this, as in all other things, in a straightforward manner, and he resolved to do so in spite of a very strong inclination to the contrary. It was growing dark by this time, and the friendly

shade of some pollards that grew on the river's brink, by adding to the gloom and enabling him to conceal the workings of his countenance, rendered the adhering to his resolution all the easier. He took a step or two within the deep shadow of the trees, and then said in a voice the tones of which almost startled himself, "Mr. Mallet, you have indeed shown yourself my friend, and I should be making you an ill return by acting with reserve towards you. You ask me where I have been this age. The truth is I have been avoiding you to punish myself for folly of which I ought not to have been guilty."

"I really don't understand *yet*," said Mallet, looking up inquiringly towards the stars.

"Your daughter," said Tom, in a scarce audible whisper.

"H'm, oh, ah, yes, indeed, well to be sure! Yes, yes, I *do* understand now. Really your conduct is very strange, young man. But you knew, of course, that I should be exceedingly angry, and resent it."

"I did not know the—the—I was not aware—I—I am ashamed, and sorry, and miserable; but—but I did not know my own—"

"Stop, my lad! no more confessions. Since you are so frank, I can't find in my heart to be less so. Now answer me this one question. Did you suppose

I had lived over sixty years in the world without knowing anything of human nature?"

"I know the contrary," said Tom.

"Then do you imagine that I did not foresee what might by possibility take place from my introducing you to my Nancy?"

Tom stood dumbfounded at this question; such an idea as this had never occurred to him—never would have occurred—and it was in vain that he strove for some minutes to find words to express the gratitude and delight which it awoke within him. When at length he spoke it was in a rather incoherent and fragmentary way, not at all like a hero of romance; indeed, the speech he made would cut such a poor figure in print that we decline to put it down; but he seized the old man's hand and retained it in his grasp, and returned its hearty pressure again and again, and, without many spoken words, there was a perfect understanding between them.

Then old Mallet laughed a hearty laugh, until the echoes came back from the other side of the water, and Tom, from sheer gladness of heart, laughed too.

"Now," said the old gentleman, "for one serious word. Nancy knows nothing of this, and *is* to know nothing. If, of yourself, you can win her, you shall have her with all my heart; but, remember, no word

or wish of mine is ever to be used as an argument to bias her free choice. You agree to that?"

"Solemnly, and in perfect faith," was the reply.

"Then we shall see you to-morrow between twelve and one," and Mallet made as though he would run off home.

"Stop!" said Tom, "I think I will step along now, and take a mouthful of supper with you."

"Oh, the fickleness of you young fellows! Well, I'll allow it for once; come along, there's a toad-in-the-hole in the oven, and you shall have a share."

Had Nancy Mallet known what had been the subject of her father's conference with Tom, it is very certain she would not have received them both with such careless cheerfulness at the supper-table. The toad-in-the-hole, which was of her making, was done to a nicety, and the crust was cracked simultaneously with some excellent jokes from the old gentleman and with much hilarity on the part of Tom, whose spirits now rose rapidly in a ratio corresponding with their late depression. He thought Nancy had never looked so charming; and, loth to take his leave, he proposed after supper that the lantern should be lighted, and they should all go into the summer-house together, and discuss the contemplated repairs and alterations. These were found to be very extensive, for the place was of rather ancient standing, having been put up

before Nancy was born, and the late severe winter had rotted most of the planks and split the joists asunder. The whole, it was evident, must come down; and Tom suggested that he should draw a plan for a new one, of a more commodious description, in which it would be possible to accommodate a tolerably large tea-party.

Nancy was delighted at the notion, and clapped her hands at the prospect of entertaining friends in the garden. Tom's proposition was talked over, and finally accepted, and he went home to his lodgings with his head full of the new design, which he had fairly down on paper by the following night.

For the next five weeks all Tom's evenings were employed in working at the summer-house in Mallet's garden. Nancy was too much interested in the progress of the new erection to be absent for any length of time. Whether Tom commenced his wooing when he commenced his work, or how it was he managed to bring about that peculiar state of affairs which always exists when a coy and modest maiden begins to feel and know that there is one to whom she is dear as the light of heaven, and to welcome the experience and the knowledge—how he brought this about we do not exactly know, but we have reason to think that before the summer-house was finished, which was not till towards the end of May, Nancy was by no means indifferent to the good opinion of the young carpenter.

CHAPTER VI.

DECISION.

NOTHING very remarkable in the history either of Ned Miller or Tom Burton occurred during the following twelve months. Ned continued his musical practice with the Professor, his suit to the Professor's daughter, and sung with increasing éclat at the Chequers; while Tom, secure in the regard of his friends, pursued his more tranquil and useful course in studying to improve himself and in imparting knowledge to others. For once, in spite of the venerable adage, the course of true love did run smooth; for Tom, one star-lighted evening, while walking with Nancy under those identical pollards on the river side which had witnessed his mortification and self-reproach, had put that question upon which the happiness of his life depended, and had heard the gentle avowal from her lips which had dissipated his doubts and fears, and filled every fibre of his frame with a new joy.

It was not, however, quite an unconditional surrender on the part of Nancy. There never yet was a frank-hearted lass who, in like circumstances to her own, was unprepared for the crisis that was sure to

come; and she had too much sense and candour to affect the astonishment she did not feel. But she put rather a sudden termination to Tom's rapturous expressions of gratitude and admiration by turning the conversation somewhat abruptly into a very serious channel.

"If, as you say," she observed, "we are to have henceforward one interest and one common welfare, these must be based on the one Christian hope, which also must be common to us both."

"Can you doubt it a moment?" said Tom. "What else could I desire?"

"And yet—" said Nancy, hesitatingly.

"And yet what? Speak out, my dear girl; let there be no reserve between us."

"You read your Bible, I know," said Nancy, "and you pray daily to God for his guidance and protection—do you not?"

"Of a surety," said Tom; "I could not be happy and neglect those duties."

"I believe it—I was sure of it; and yet I never see you at the communion."

"I feared that was coming," said Tom.

"Then I am afraid you must be conscious that you are in the wrong."

"I do not know; my mind has been divided on that subject for a long time. I have scruples; which

perhaps you might not condemn if you knew them. A hundred times I have resolved to cast them aside, and a hundred times they have retained their hold. Do not imagine that I have not thought seriously again and again on this great duty. I have thought, and read too, a great deal. I know by heart all the arguments which have been advanced against the neglect of this ordinance, and I confess myself unable to refute them; and yet, though my reason consents, and my mind acknowledges the validity of these arguments, there is a feeling which draws me away when I would approach the Lord's table, in spite of a previous resolution."

"You do not mean a prejudice of any kind?"

"No, no! unless it be a prejudice against myself. I am not worthy; I cannot make myself worthy."

"If you wait till you can do that, you will never come."

"I know, I know—you do but say what I have said to myself a thousand times."

Tom spoke this in a rather mortified tone, and Nancy, seeing that the subject gave him pain, changed the conversation, only expressing her conviction that if he would revolve the matter deliberately in his mind, and pray to God for guidance, he would find the scruples which had so long withstood his sense of duty disperse of themselves.

Tom treasured these words in his memory, but said nothing more on the question that night.

Some days after, while he was busy in the library of the Institute, rummaging among the rather disorderly shelves for some work which he recollected as treating of this question, and which he thought he should like to read once more, Mr. Carlton came in, and asked him what he was in search of. Tom told him, and told him at the same time what was his motive in wishing to read the book over again, stating his convictions as to his duty, and describing as well as he could the contradictory feeling which kept him from its performance.

"I am glad," said Mr. Carlton, "that you have spoken to me of your own accord on this matter; had I not entertained the idea that you would certainly do so ere long, I should have broached it to you myself before now; though, indeed, I have done it often enough from the pulpit, as you must be aware."

"Quite," said Tom; "you did so in the first sermon you preached here. I wrote down what you said then, and it has often been in my mind since."

"You say you have nothing to offer by way of apology for not obeying the command of your Saviour, except an indefinable disinclination, which repels you, though you can hardly explain it. Are you sure pride has nothing to do with it?"

"I think not—I hope not;" said Tom. "What can pride have to do with it?"

"Much; in some cases, everything. Pride is, perhaps, the most deceptive of all sins, and will infect hearts free from almost every other failing. Suppose it should happen that, in your own case—you knowing your obligations so thoroughly—believing, as you profess to believe, the blessings, the Divine influence of this sacrament, and the advantages derivable through its use to your spiritual life; suppose, I say, this knowledge urging you, on the one hand, to do what is right, and, on the other hand, that 'indefinable feeling' you speak of, born in your own heart, restraining you from so doing. If that is the case, there must be pride at work, because you allow your own impulses to prevail against your convictions, and also against the commands of God."

This was an idea which Tom had never entertained, and it set him pondering thoughtfully, with a rather downcast face. "But," said he, suddenly brightening up, "it cannot be pride, because I really have a profound sense of my unworthiness to partake of the holy communion."

"That may be; but you have often heard that 'pride apes humility;' what if it should be the fact that pride also allies itself with humility—humility of a specious sort? This unworthiness you speak of, do

you deplore it as you ought, and pray against it?—or do you cherish the sense of it unduly, as something praiseworthy, and so make of your sense of sinfulness a barrier to fence you from the means of grace?”

Tom was obliged to confess that he had not examined himself in this light. “That idea is new to me,” he said; “but it is all-important, I see, and I will not forget to work it out.”

Both were now silent; Tom had found the book he was looking for, but instead of going, he stood with a confused countenance, as though wishing to speak, yet scarce knowing what to say.

“You have some communication to make, I see,” said Mr. Carlton; “out with it, my lad.”

“I was only thinking,” said Tom, “that I ought to have told you that I have lately been moved to the reconsideration of this subject, not of my own accord, as you supposed, but by another person.”

“Indeed! pray who is this person?”

Tom blushed up to the eyes.

“Well, well, you needn’t tell me; I think I know all about it; I might have guessed as much, perhaps.”

“But, sir, it would not be right in me, would it, to become a communicant to please another?”

“Your pride again, Burton. Suppose I arrange the question in another form:—is it right in you, feeling that it is your duty, to refuse to become a communi-

cant *because* it will please another? If another tempts you to do what is wrong, resist the devil with all your might, and he will flee from you; but when God in his providence sends you a friend to counsel what is right, see to it that the pride of your own heart does not deter you from walking in His way. Go now, and think over what I have said. I shall hope to find ere long that you have thought out and prayed out the right conclusion on this all-important subject."

Tom took his way home, with a harder problem to solve than he had ever tackled before. He was not without a suspicion that Mr. Carlton had some reason for ascribing his disinclination to pride; but he was far from imagining how well-grounded that reason was, and how completely his good friend had fathomed the depths of his mind, and found out his besetting sin. Nor did he discover this all at once; the work of self-examination is never a rapid process, there being no royal road to a knowledge of our own hearts. Mr. Carlton, however, had taught him to mistrust himself; and he set about the task before him with more earnestness and more diffidence than he had ever brought to any other business. He read over again all the arguments and persuasives which had been so long familiar to him, and as he did not forget to pray for the illuminating influence of God's Holy Spirit, it

is not wonderful that the eyes of his understanding were opened, that he detected by degrees the existence of that proud self-confidence which had led him astray; and that, having detected it, he was enabled to root it up and cast it aside, and joyfully to accept the gracious invitation of the Saviour. The result was slow to manifest itself. It was not in Tom's nature to be precipitate in any act which he felt to be of paramount importance; but when at length the moment of thorough conviction came, there came with it a hearty resolution to obey the Divine command, and, with God's help, to persevere to the end.

It was several weeks after the brief conversation in the library of the Institute when Tom called on Mr. Carlton at the parsonage. That gentleman had been expecting to see him for some days. We shall not detail the conversation that ensued, because we have no wish to give too serious an aspect to this brief narrative of work-day life. Be it enough to remark that from that hour Tom Burton never again experienced that indefinable reluctance to partake of the holy communion, but found that in obeying this command of Christ he availed himself of the Christian's grandest privilege.

CHAPTER VII.

ALTERATIONS.

ABOUT this time an event, which had long been anticipated with various feelings by the good people of the town of —, took place. This was nothing less than the passing of a bill through Parliament authorising the construction of a branch railway to the county town, which would have the effect of bringing them within a few hours' distance of the capital. The bill had been a long while wriggling through the tight fists of the lawyers and agents, whose tenacity of grip had well-nigh worn out the patience of the shareholders; and now that these preliminaries were all settled, they were not disposed to lose time in the construction of the line. The sudden accession of business to the town imparted to it an air of unusual bustle and anxiety. Among others, Mr. Shepherd had accepted several contracts; and he found his engagements all at once doubled in amount, and at the same time demanding immediate execution. In consequence of the bankruptcy of a rival firm, which

had speculated itself into the "Gazette," and which firm had contracted to build the intermediate stations, their contracts were also transferred to him, though he would gladly have declined them had it been prudent to do so. Affairs at the workshop now assumed a totally different aspect. The first thing to be done was to run up new working premises for the accommodation of the fresh hands, which had to be taken on in numbers. A fortnight sufficed for this; and when the new workshop was opened Tom Burton found himself appointed foreman, at a salary nearly double his former wages, and with a discretionary power and responsibility vested in him which almost took away his breath at the first onset. He had not sought the post, though he knew that such an appointment must be made, and was quite as much astonished as he was gratified when it fell upon him. He was not, however, so silly as to refuse it; he saw the advantage that would accrue to him from filling it creditably, and the effect it would have upon his future prospects. At the same time he modestly reminded his employer of his own youth and inexperience, and expressed a hope that too much would not be expected of him.

"I expect," said Mr. Shepherd, "that you will look to my interests, and do your best in all things. No man can do more; I am satisfied you will do that; be you satisfied that we shall work well

together. If any difficulty occurs, apply to me at once."

It was some time before Tom became quite naturalised to his new post, or confident in his own ability to occupy it worthily, and the testimony of others to that effect reached him from various quarters before he had settled it in his own mind. He now longed for nothing more than for an opportunity of showing his gratitude to his employer for the handsome manner in which he had manifested his approbation. Talking the matter over with Mallet and Nancy one evening, the old gentleman suggested an experiment.

"You know there is the Peters contract," said he; "when the town station is finished, that will be the next thing. Suppose you get up some designs for the village stations; if they should fail, there is no harm in trying."

Tom liked the idea; he set to work that same hour, sat up half the night drawing rough plans, and ere that day week had three finished designs, handsomely drawn and tinted. He had several of Peters' men under him, and from them he learned enough of the terms of the contract to guide him as to the limits of expense. Having submitted them first to Mallet and Nancy, and secured their approval, he sent them, with a short note, to Mr. Shepherd. On the following day, while the men were at dinner, he was summoned to the counting-

house, where Mr. Shepherd was awaiting him, with the plans opened on his desk.

"I see you do not forget my interests, Mr. Burton," said he; "will you excuse my asking are these designs your unassisted production?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom, "I shall be but too happy if either of them is acceptable to you; they will make but a poor return for your kindness."

"I assure you," said Mr. Shepherd, "I shall use them all; they are the very thing. Some trifling alterations are necessary, because you have not seen the several sites. But the groom shall drive you over the ground to-morrow, and then you can make the modifications required. But there are five stations; it will be as well to have a new design for each. Can you make me a couple more?"

"Most certainly," said Tom.

"Then do so; and at your earliest convenience let us have the working drawings, for we will begin upon them at once."

That journey down the unformed line, with Nancy in the phaeton at his side, was better than a holiday to Tom. He visited all the sites, took notes on the several spots, and returned, after a pleasant jaunt, to report progress to his employer.

The two extra designs were forthcoming in a few days, and the whole of the five stations rose ere the

summer was ended—the exact embodiments of Tom's first ideas in architecture. They were universally admired, and really formed charming objects in the landscape. To Tom's surprise and no small perplexity, before the last of them was roofed in he received a note from Mr. Shepherd, containing a cheque for a handsome sum in payment for his voluntary labours. Tom took the cheque back to his employer, and would have returned it; but that was not so easy.

"I cannot allow you to work for nothing," said that gentleman, "and I cannot think of accepting a sum of money from you. This cheque is for the amount charged to the company for the designs you have made in your leisure time, and you will not be so silly as to refuse it."

There was no answering such an argument, and so Tom had to put up with the affront; he settled the difficulty, however, by transferring the cheque to Nancy, who popped it into the savings' bank, where it made a capital nucleus for further accumulations.

As foreman, Tom gave general satisfaction, as well to the man as to the master; the partisan of neither, he guarded the interests of both, and by his careful and equitable rule maintained harmony in the establishment.

Tom had not held the reins of government six months when Roberts, the aged foreman of the old

shop, suddenly fell sick and died in a few days. Ned Miller, who had watched with considerable chagrin, if not with some degree of envy, the prosperity of his former friend and comrade, immediately made application for the vacant post. To his inconceivable mortification, it was denied him, and that in terms which showed there was nothing to be hoped from a repetition of his application. Angry at his defeat, Ned took the first opportunity of speaking to his employer, and remonstrated in no very modest way against the imaginary injustice done him.

"I cannot listen to you," said Mr. Shepherd, "much less submit to any dictation from you in regard to the management of my business. As you demand a reason for the refusal of your request, I tell you frankly that you spend too much of your time at the public-house to be a fit example to others."

"I know my business," replied Ned, "as well as any man on the premises, and nobody can accuse me of neglecting it."

"I have not accused you," was the reply; "but I also know my business, one essential part of which is to be careful in the selection of those to whom the management is confided."

"Since I have not your confidence, sir," said Ned, sharply, "perhaps we had better part."

"Probably you are right," said Mr. Shepherd,

coolly; "I have often thought it might prove a benefit to you to leave the town."

"Then, sir, I leave on this day fortnight."

Thus Ned Miller, in a moment of pique, threw up his situation. The Professor, to whom he gave a rather garbled version of the affair, applauded his spirit, and advised him, instead of leaving the town, to start in business for himself, and let his employer see that he could do without him. Ned's pride dilated at the idea, and he began immediately to take steps for carrying it out. By the time his fortnight had expired he had taken premises within sight of his employer's house, and got a flaming sign-board painted with the inscription "Miller, Carpenter and Builder," in letters a foot long.

As it happened, it was not at all a bad time for a young man of industrious habits, who could command a small capital, to start in business, as there was a great deal of work to be done at remunerating prices. But Ned had really no capital; the constant drain upon his resources which his habits had entailed had kept him poor, and he was obliged to go in debt with whomsoever could be found to trust him for the materials he wanted. Notwithstanding this, however, he might have succeeded by dint of self-denial and perseverance, had he possessed these qualities, for at his outset in business circumstances greatly

favoured him. The influx of new labourers into the town overcrowded the Chequers, which had no longer room for its guests. A new music hall had to be run up in the rear; and Professor Soke had little difficulty in obtaining the job for his prospective son-in-law, and in inducing his friend the landlord to advance the necessary sums for purchasing materials and paying wages. Ned now saw himself at once transformed from a journeyman to a master, and relished the transformation exceedingly. With a handsome figure and good address, and no lack of assurance, he seemed likely to make his way, and people augured well of his future prosperity. Eager to do business, he sent in tenders for repairs at the workhouse; and before the music hall was finished had obtained a new contract from the parish to a much larger amount. Nothing doubting but that he was now on the road to fortune, he began to assume the airs of an independent man, and talked pompously of his intentions for the future. It would have been well had he confined himself to talking; but, unfortunately, he began to act out his dreams of greatness. The fact of his having the parish contract sufficed to procure him credit, and considerable sums of money now passed through his hands. Imagining that this state of things would always endure, Ned thought he might as well marry and settle in life. The notion once in his head, he

could not rest till it was carried out. He hired a semi-villa in the suburbs, furnished it upon credit, had the banns put up in the parish church, and in due time bore off Cecilia from the altar to a lodging at the seaside, and thence, a few days afterwards, to her suburban residence. The Sons of Harmony signalized this event by a magnificent jubilation, at which the Professor presided according to his wont. But alas! this was the final exhibition of the Professor's skill; the gout which had so often attacked his toes got into his fingers before the honeymoon was over, and effectually incapacitated him for all further performances on the piano. It was lucky for him, if for no one else, that the marriage came off when it did; he had now to be removed to his daughter's residence, who henceforth must have the care of ministering to his wants, while the burden of his maintenance fell upon Ned.

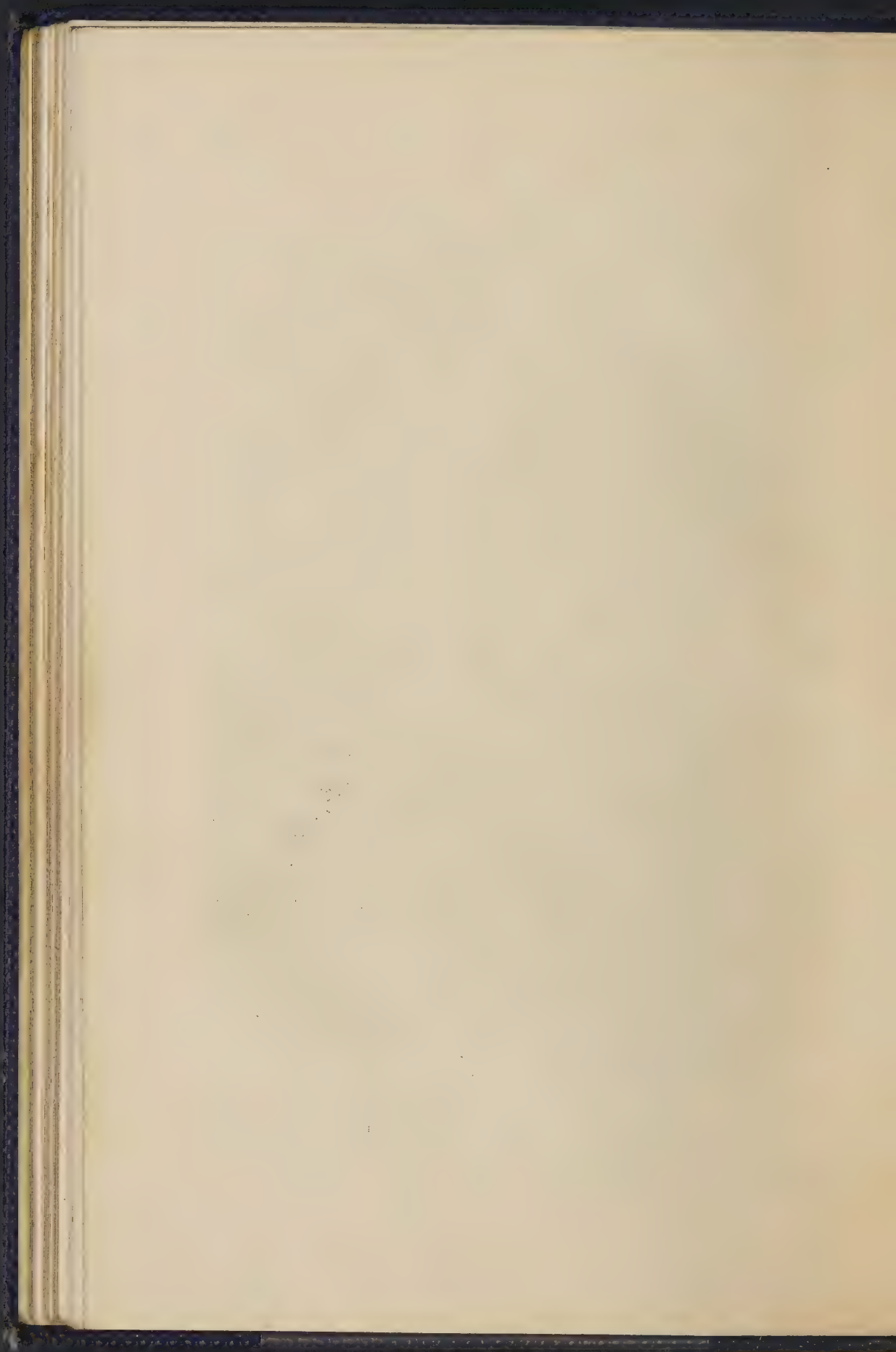
It was not long before the new Benedict discovered the blunder he had committed in his hasty marriage. The dashing, showy Cecilia made anything but a thrifty wife; management she had none, and though Ned was but a bad economist himself, he stood appalled at the expenses of their small household under her administration. Then there was the Professor groaning everlastingly in his uneasy chair—now shedding maudlin tears over his unhappy fate—now

frantic with impatience at the painful twinges that racked his disabled limbs, and only at rest when dozing under the influence of the dram-bottle. From the discomfort at home Ned flew to the old excitement at the Chequers, and found some compensation for a brief hour or two in presiding in the new music hall which he had erected, and in the rounds of applause with which his vocal performances were received.

But the tide was about to turn, and the ebb was even still more rapid than the flow. When the parish contract was finished, and the accounts came to be squared up, it was found that Mr. Miller had tendered for the work at a price at which it could not be done, and that when all expenses were paid he must be a loser to a considerable amount by the job. But facts of a worse kind came to light; it was discovered that the contractor had drawn nearly the whole amount due to him, whilst the firms who had supplied him with materials were still unpaid. The creditors, naturally enough, were indignant at this discovery, and they used little ceremony and showed less consideration in securing what they could. Ned Miller was a bankrupt before he had been twenty months a tradesman; his stock and his household furniture were sold up; the semi-villa, emptied of its contents, had to be abandoned, and the



"From the discomfort at home, Ned flew to the old excitement at 'The Chequers,' and found some compensation for a brief hour or two in presiding in the new music-hall which he had erected." (p. 66.)



poor old Professor, now in the last stage of helplessness, had to be carted back once more to the lodgings over the potato-shed, which now received the whole household. Here the wretched old man lingered for several months; and his last days were embittered by privations which he wanted the resignation to accept in a proper spirit, and by wranglings and recriminations between his daughter and her husband, who attributed all his misfortunes to the marriage into which he accused them both of entrapping him. Poor old Soke died, as he had lived, without one thought of the future; he refused the consolations of religion when they were offered him, and sank into the grave equally without a hope and without a fear connected with the world to come. After his death Ned grew ashamed of working as a journeyman in the town where he had been known as a master. Without consulting any one, he made Cecilia sell the few articles they possessed, and rising before the dawn one winter's morning, the pair started by the parliamentary train for London.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONTRASTS.

WE shall leave the reader to imagine for himself the details of the next few years in the histories of Tom Burton and Ned Miller, stating only the principal events in the lives of both.

Tom, with the prospects of matrimony before him, laboured now with a double purpose, and, owing to his abstemious and self-denying habits, was enabled to lay by the greater moiety of his earnings. When the railway was completed and opened, the company had certain patches of land to dispose of, situated near the line, and which they put up for sale; one of these plots, consisting of about three roods, old Mallet, without mentioning his intention to any one, bid for at the sale, and had knocked down to him. It was part of a pleasant slope, with a few old elms and young birches standing upon it, which overlooked the scene of Tom's labours and the town close by, with the clear river meandering among the meadows to the right. He then set Tom to work on a design for a good roomy cottage, which should not only be convenient in itself, but should also look well in the landscape. Tom entered on the business with his usual zeal, and imagining that the old gentleman

wished to invest his savings advantageously, he spared no pains in forwarding the scheme. The design being approved of, the site was cleared, and under the joint superintendence of Tom and the proprietor himself, the building began to rise slowly and peep out from its screen of hanging foliage. There was no hurry, however; it began in the spring, was roofed in the autumn, and had the winter to settle in before the internal finishings were commenced. These formed the principal occupation of Mallet's leisure time during the following spring; and before the midsummer holidays the cottage, finished at all points, and standing in the centre of a neat garden, flanked with umbrageous elms and pendulous birches, stood spick and span new and ready for a tenant.

"Now all you want" said Tom, as he finished the survey of the rooms, "is a good tenant."

"Yes, to be sure, and a good tenant I mean to have; for look you, young scapegrace, I mean to be tenant myself."

"You!"

"Yes, I, and you too! Now, what d'ye think of that? Hark ye! master Tom; when I gave you leave to win my Nancy if you could, I didn't intend that you should steal her from me; or if I did, I find I can't stand it, and it mustn't be. That's why I've bought this ground and built the cottage, and

that's why I've put a growlery in the wing, where I can sulk by myself as much as I like."

"*You* sulk, indeed! I should like to see how you would set about it."

"Well, I'll be free to sulk if I choose, anyhow."

"And how about the school?" said Tom.

"I can't give up the school either; but I have engaged a competent assistant, a capital fellow, who is coming next half; he will relieve me of half my labours, so that I shall require to be there but a few hours in the day."

Thus it happened that in the autumn of that year, when Tom and Nancy were married by Mr. Carlton, there was a delightful home ready to receive them, and there was no severance of the fond ties, which both deemed so sacred, between parent and child.

Six years have passed away since Ned Miller with his wife Cecilia arrived by the parliamentary train in London: let us see what they have been doing all this time.

Ned had been partly moved to his London trip by the instigations of his own vanity. He had long taken as genuine and well deserved all the praises lavished on his vocal performances by the Sons of Harmony, and was not without a secret persuasion that in London he should make his way in the

musical world, and take rank as a professional man. He was destined to make some bitter and mortifying discoveries in this respect. When he introduced himself to those who cater for the public amusement, and sought an engagement, he found it difficult even to procure a hearing, and was further horrified that those who condescended to hear shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders at his performance, instead of applauding. By degrees it began to dawn upon him that he had deceived himself and been deceived by others all along; one old stager, less considerate or ceremonious than the rest, at length told him that though his voice had been good enough, it was all but ruined by bad and vicious practice, that it would be tolerated nowhere but in a tavern, and, moreover, that as to musical science, he had everything to learn.

Ned had therefore to relinquish his professional pretensions and fall back upon his trade. This disappointment only further embittered his feelings towards his wife, whom he reviled for lending herself to the flattery which had deceived him, and he now treated her with marked neglect and unkindness. He hired himself as journeyman to a cabinet-maker in the cheap furniture trade, and wrought hard in the construction of specious-looking articles of furniture, made to sell. But he found the working hours in

London, coupled with the vile odours of the London workshop, much more wearisome and exacting than he had been accustomed to; he found also the rules and restrictions of the London shop not at all in accordance with the habits he had lately acquired, and he grew daily less painstaking and punctual. Having no domestic pleasures or enjoyment of his home, he sought excitement in degrading excesses, and was to be seen in the lowest resorts of the drunkard. When, after some months, he had recovered from the mortification inflicted by the disappointment of his musical ambition, he began to sigh once more for the luxury of applause, and naturally looked out for the arena in which it was to be won. In a low sing-song tavern in the worst purlieus of Westminster he again found admirers, and there he would spend his evenings and his earnings, while Cecilia pined in a garret, almost in want of the bare means of existence.

As Ned grew poorer he grew more reckless and less careful to please his employer. The latter happening to rebuke him sharply for some act of carelessness, Ned flew into a rage, loaded him with abuse, and was discharged on the spot. He did not care much for that; indeed, he had resolved to be no man's servant for the future, and once more, therefore, he set up for himself.

It was not now as a respectable tradesman, doing

fair work for a fair wage, that Ned began the world anew, but in the character, the woful experiences of which he had yet to discover, of a miserable garret-master. He had seen in the exploits of his late employer how, by the use of veneer and glue and refuse timber, the most imposing and splendid articles of furniture are vamped up for sale, and enormous profits are made at the lowest outlay; and he saw no reason, being morally blind, why he should not do the same. He set about doing it; with a few shillings he bought the wretched materials, and working in his own garret, embarked in the same trade, making his goods with his own hands, and then hawking them about among the brokers and Jew dealers upon a hired truck. He did not realize the profit he expected, but did realize instead the bitterest mortification and heart-burning at the undisguised villany of the class among the number of whose victims he had enrolled himself. The dealers, aware of his exact position, and knowing that he must either sell or starve, gave what they chose for his productions, and secured all the iniquitous profit on the false wares to themselves. Ned, while cursing them in his heart, was obliged to maintain the semblance of civility, and struggled desperately in the evils which he dared not shake off. Still he would boast to himself he was his own master, he was at no

man's beck and call, he had his liberty, his time was his own, he could work when he liked and play when he liked, and no man had the right to call him to account. Poor Ned! he did not see that, while boasting of his freedom and independence, he was the worst of bondsmen—that he was the slave of the most despicable pride and the most miserable conceit, which were leading him faster and faster, as the years rolled on, in the way that goes down to death.

It is Saturday night, and the scene is the White-chapel road, lighted up with the broad jets of flaring gas which illuminate the Saturday-night market. Amidst the din and tumult of traffic which concentrates under that fiery haze, a haggard man, slipshod and tattered, his beard of a month's growth, his eyes bloodshot, his features jaundiced and gaunt, is seen fluttering in rags and pushing desperately yet with failing strength at a truck on which lies a huge loo-table turned bottom upwards. The blustering wind drives the rain-drops like sharp arrows along the street; it is growing late, and the loo-table must be sold to-night to pay the week's rent and provide the morrow's dinner. As the gaunt man pushes furiously at the truck, it sticks fast in the mud; he is half bewildered with liquor, and it is easy to see that he is half starved as well. The mob gathers round in

spite of the rain, and they laugh at his difficulty, and with mock cheers urge him to try again.

On the opposite side of the wide road—there where the gaudy portal of the gin-shop sends a flash of dazzling light across the way, there stands on the kerbstone a female figure, her feet sodden with the mire, her shapeless bundling of garments dripping with the fast-falling rain; muffled in her arms and close pressed to her breast, she carries an infant of a month old, and while she shelters its pale wan face from the descending storm, she lifts up her voice, which rings like a rather cracked bell through the whole district, in terrific execution of an air of Beethoven, garnished with such a cascade of spontaneous runs and flourishes as would have astonished that blind magician, and driven him beside himself, but which are pronounced “stunning” and “first-rate” by the peripatetic connoisseurs of Whitechapel.

If the man with the truck succeeds in selling his loo table, and if the woman with the infant and the loud voice awakens the patronizing applause of the public, then Ned Miller and his wife Cecilia will have the wherewithal to clear the week's scores and buy a steak, a loaf, and a bottle of gin for their dinner and dessert to-morrow.

Six months later, and it is Saturday evening at

the "Roserie," for by that name Mr. Mallet has called the cottage on the slope, which at this moment is one of the happiest homes in all this land of happy cottage homes, and presents to the eye one of the loveliest pictures ever seen. The deep-green foliage of July covers the tall trees, and between the breaks in the verdurous screen the white walls of the snug nest peep forth and flash back the warm rays of the sinking sun, which in another hour will have settled behind the far blue hills. The rose-trees which Nancy planted on the western front have shot up and up until their tops have surmounted the gable of the roof, where the crimson flowers gleam in the sunlight like live coals of fire. The vine on the south side has crept along over the windows of the parlour and the old gentleman's growlery, while the honeysuckle has taken entire possession of the porch, and buried it out of sight in its fragrant embrace. Close to the porch stands Tom Barton, tossing in his arms a two-years' darling, all curls and laughter, whose chubby legs are kicking right and left, while the little fat fingers are clutching at dad's whiskers. Nancy is at the open parlour window with baby in her arms, said baby being at this moment in the middle of an inarticulate speech of astonishing eloquence and earnestness, intelligible to none but mother, and expressed in a torrent of crowings and

chucklings, which do not seem likely to come speedily to a full-stop. At the end of the garden, beyond that winding walk between the espaliers, there is the trimmest of arbours, all overgrown with the clematis, where, if you look attentively, you may see a neat pair of legs terminating in garden-shoes and buff gaiters, and may also discern a thin spiral of blue smoke curling lazily out over the trellis-work on the top, which, you are to understand, are indications that within sits old Mallet himself; and if you walk up to the arbour there you will find him, having finished his garden-work for the day, smoking his pipe, with a slip or two of paper before him, on which, not to waste the time, he is just doing a turn at the differential calculus. You will note that the good man is scarcely altered since we described him last, save that his hair is whiter, which makes his ruddy face look a little more ruddy.

But now baby has crowed himself weary, has finished that long oration, and has dropped off to sleep in his cot, and here comes Nancy to claim young Tommy and put him to bed. Tommy has already the instinct of obedience, and with a farewell kiss to dad-da and another to "Gramp," as he calls his grandfather, and which he is carried to the arbour to receive, he takes his mother's hand and toddles off to bed. While Nancy is undressing him and

teaching him to lisp a prayer for them all, Tom intrudes on the old gentleman in the arbour, and the next minute both of them are walking through the garden, and by a winding path up the slope to the look-out on the summit, where they will catch a glorious view of the approaching sunset. A long bank of purple cloud hovers over the horizon, and seems to float in a clear sea of vivid emerald green; and now the sun dips gradually into the cloud strata, and sets the whole mass aglow with his flaming beams, until the entire bank of cloud seems of molten furnace fire. The far landscape beneath, fringed with the irregular tops of forest trees, grows a dark, dense, indigo colour, and the various objects in the distance are lost and swallowed up in that sombre hue.

"I see the mail train yet," says Tom.

"What eyes you have; it has been gone this quarter of an hour, and must be at least six miles off."

"Very likely, but I see it—a line of white smoke splitting the dark blue. And I see something else; I see Mr. Carlton with his back to the parsonage, and walking this way. I have a presentiment he is coming here."

"I fancy you have a reason for the presentiment," said the old man, "though I can't say what it is."

Tom did not explain; he only said, "We will go and meet him; he is certainly coming here; see, he has crossed the line."

They met Mr. Carlton at the garden gate. That gentleman, after shaking hands with Mallet, drew Tom aside. "My friend in London," the good vicar began, "has executed your commission as you desired. He found your old comrade sick and penniless, and dependent for bread on what his wife could gather by singing in the streets. The poor man is by this time, thanks to the teachings of adversity, thoroughly convinced of his folly, and is but too glad to accept your offer. Your liberality has rescued him from want, perhaps starvation, and the hope you have imparted of a better future has done much towards restoring him to health. I need not say that he is truly grateful for your kindness; he will say that himself, and you may expect him here as soon as he is fit to travel. You have my most hearty commendation in what you have done, and I am happy to have taken a part in it. Good night."

The vicar was gone before Tom could find words to thank him or request his longer stay, so he went into the house, where Nancy was laying the supper. They saw by the expression of his face that thoughts more than usually agreeable were brooding in Tom's mind, and both immediately demanded to know what secret intelligence the vicar had imparted. Tom said he would tell them before he went to bed, and accordingly, when supper was done and the chapter

was read and the prayers were said, he told them in few words how, hearing of his old comrade's misfortunes in London, he had spoken to Mr. Shepherd in his favour, had obtained liberty to re-engage him and give him a new trial, had had him sought out and relieved, and was in expectation of shortly seeing him there.

The conduct of Tom in this instance was precisely in accordance with the feelings both of father and daughter, though the one laughed and the other cried at the story. It was settled that a cottage which chanced to be vacant not far off should be taken for the Millers, that Tom should contrive to keep Ned well employed, and that Nancy should try what she could do in imparting some acquaintance with the arts of domestic management to the thriftless wife.

"And as for the temptation of the Chequers," said Mallet, "I think we need not fear much on that score. The landlord, by defrauding the revenue, has lost his license, and I hear from good authority that it will not be given to another."

"I am glad of that," said Tom; "then my old friend shall have a new chance, and, with God's blessing on our endeavours, we will lead him at last into a BETTER WAY."

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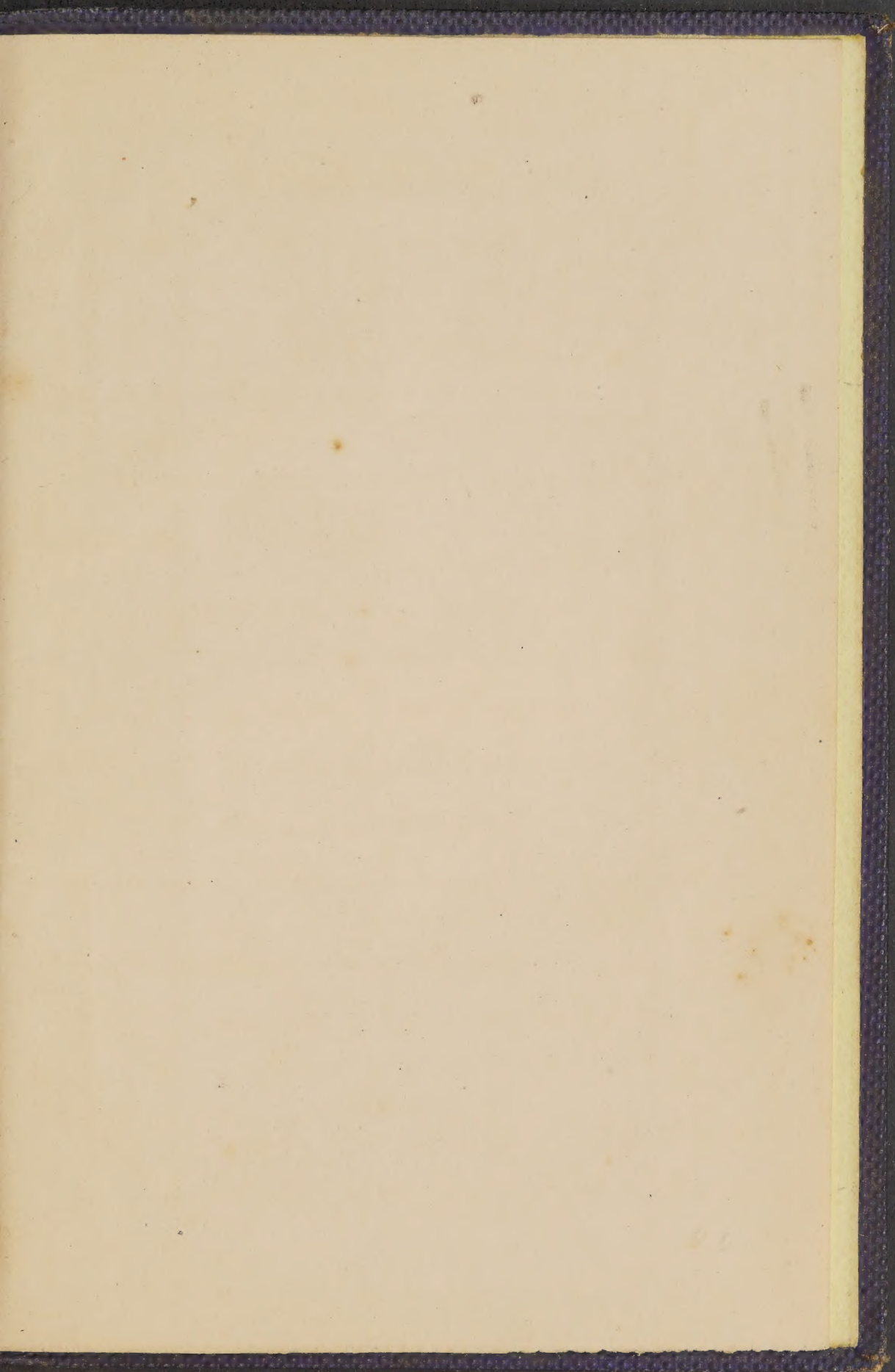
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